CAPTA Call
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CAP GRANTEES

Grantees interested in participating in training workshops and technical assistance should email capcentraloffice@hrsa.gov for referrals and further information.

October 3, 2002

THE AUTOMATED SIX-MONTH PROJECT UPDATE SYSTEM

CAP grantees participated in a technical assistance call on October 3, 2002, to learn more about the new automated monitoring system that CAP is introducing. The first element to be automated is the six-month project update, the tool used for program-wide monitoring of the Community Access Program. The call was hosted by Teresa Brown, CAP Evaluation Coordinator.

Reporting Periods and Deadlines

Reporting periods for six-month project updates are March 1 to August 31 and September 1 to the end of February. Notices of CAP grant awards state that six-month project updates are due October 1 (for the period March-August) and April 1 (for the period September-February). However, due to the phasing-in of the automated monitoring system, ***the period for submission of March-August 2002 project updates is later than usual***.

For the reporting period March 2002 through August 2002, the new Web-based reporting system will open on December 1, 2002 and will close in mid-January. Thus, the final deadline for submitting project updates for the period March to August 2002 is January 15, 2003.

In the future, all six-month project updates will be due by the end of September and the end of March. Grantees are encouraged to visit the Reporting Requirements and Due Dates page of the grantee Web site (http://www.capcommunity.hrsa.gov) for updates.

Overview of the Automated Monitoring System

The automated monitoring system will be Web-based. Its purposes are to:

- Facilitate the collection and manipulation of data from CAP grantees;
- Facilitate sharing of information among grantees; and
- Link all information about grantees and their programs in a database that will be available to grantees as well as to staff at the CAP Central Office.

Implementation of the automated system will occur in phases. The six-month project updates are the first monitoring documents to move to the automated system. In Phase 2, which will coincide with the September-February reporting period, logic models and program management matrices will be added to the automated system.

The automated system will be pilot-tested during November 2002. Grantees selected to participate in the pilot testing will be notified within the next few weeks.

In the future, project updates will be required to be submitted during a window of about 45 days around the end of each reporting period. Generally, the time period for submissions will be from 15 days before the end of the reporting period until the last day of the following month. For the September 2002 to February 2003 reporting period, for example, the time period for submission of six-month project updates will be mid-February to the end of March 2003. After the end of March, grantees will not be able to submit additional data for their six-month project updates. During the period that the system is open for submissions, grantees will be reminded of the deadline for submitting their updates.

Copies of the revised project update forms are not yet available. Ms. Brown encouraged grantees to use the existing project update forms to collect and organize their data in advance. Collection of data on an ongoing basis makes it unnecessary to go back and capture information from the previous six months of program activity.

Changes to Six-Month Project Updates

Ms. Brown described the changes that have been made in the six-month project updates in response to comments and suggestions from grantees. She stressed that although the format and manner of submission are changing, the requirements for completing the updates are not changing significantly.

- Open-ended questions are being replaced by closed-ended, multiple-choice questions. This change will introduce greater standardization into the reporting process and make it easier to use information reported in the updates to draw general conclusions about groups of communities or programs.

- Repetitive questions concerning barriers to and/or facilitators of progress in specific program areas have been eliminated. Instead, grantees will be asked to provide a general update on accomplishments during the six-month reporting period, discuss general barriers to progress, and describe specific barriers that impeded progress in certain program areas.

- The new reporting format will have three sections instead of two. In Section 1, grantees will be asked to provide a general update on accomplishments and barriers during the reporting period and to respond to general questions about governance and expenditure of funds. Section 2 will focus on specific changes in the collaborative during the reporting period and will correspond closely to Section A in the old reporting format. Section 3 will focus on outputs and will correspond closely to Section B in the old format.

- A question has been added that will allow grantees to report the receipt of in-kind contributions. Grantees are not required to quantify all of the in-kind support they receive from partner organizations but may choose to identify particular in-kind contributions such as volunteer hours contributed by doctors or other staff to run a clinic. Grantees are encouraged to report data regarding in-kind contributions as it demonstrates efforts to build sustainability into the program.

The Web interface that grantees will use to complete the six-month project updates is not yet available for general viewing, Ms. Brown said. She agreed to send grantees copies of the questions that will be asked in the new general update section (Section 1) of the project update form, so that they can begin drafting their responses. These questions will be sent to grantees by October 18.

Tips on Completing Six-Month Project Updates

Ms. Brown offered the following additional suggestions to grantees on completing six-month project updates:

- Limit activities reported in the six-month project updates to those directly related to the CAP budget. Activities not directly attributable to CAP funding should not be reported in the six-month project update.

- Read through the form in its entirety before beginning to complete it. Identify the sections where it is most appropriate to report data concerning outreach, referrals, enrollment, etc., and report those data in that section.

Questions Posed During the Call

1. Where are the old project update forms and instructions located on the CAP Web site?

To find the old project update forms and instructions, go to the CAP home page (http://www.capcommunity.hrsa.gov) and click on Evaluation (near the top of the screen on the right, underneath the pictures). Then click on Six-Month Project Updates in the navigation bar on the left side of the screen.

2. *What does it mean for a program element to be "fully operational"? For example, if an* information system is ready for implementation but has not yet been brought into use at all project sites, should it be considered fully operational?

   In general, it would be reasonable to consider a program element to be fully operational if it is functioning as intended and is being used by some, although not by all, program partners.

3. *What mechanisms exist for sharing information among CAP grantees?*

   Three mechanisms currently exist for grantees to share information and/or request technical assistance on a specific topic.

   - Grantees can share information by subscribing to one of the listservs on the CAP Web site. Currently four listservs are available, dealing with Case Management, Evaluation, MIS, and Pharmacy. A new listserv will soon be created to deal with transportation issues. (From the CAP home page, click on Listserv on the blue bar near the top of the screen. This page provides instructions on how to join or leave a listserv, post a comment or question to the listserv, and search the listserv archives.)

   - Grantees can request technical assistance from outside consultants or peer communities by submitting the TA Request Form on the CAP Web site. (From the CAP home page, click on TA Resources on the blue bar near the top of the screen. Then click on TA Request Form in the navigation bar on the left side of the screen.)

   - Grantees can also announce an interest in a specific topic through the monthly newsletter for CAP grantees. (Contact Diana Der Koorkanian at (301)594-4113 or by e-mail at dderkoorkanian@hrsa.gov to discuss the topic area that you would like posted in the CAPStone newsletter.)

4. *What is the current status of the quarterly status reports to field project officers?*

   These reports are being incorporated into the six-month project updates.

5. *Will it be possible to extract CAP-wide data from the automatic monitoring system?*

   Yes, the system will allow the creation of reports that draw on CAP-wide data.

6. *When will the CAP compendium be updated?*

   Plans to update the compendium are currently being reviewed within the Central Office. Grantees will be informed when updates to the compendium documents can be submitted.

7. *Will the new reporting format provide an opportunity to report program outcomes that were not expected or planned for when programs were initiated?*

   Yes.

8. *What is the CAP coalition? Is it the original group of organizations that came together to submit the proposal for CAP funding, or is it broader than that?*

   It varies. In some communities a small, tightly-knit group of organizations forms the CAP coalition. Other communities have formed broader coalitions that include primary and secondary partners. Coalition membership can change as projects evolve. Each CAP community defines the membership of its coalition based on criteria that it establishes.

9. *How do grantees address involvement in regional and national coalitions in the six-month project update?*

   Activities at the local level are the primary focus of the six-month project update. Involvement in regional and national coalitions can be documented in the general update section of the update. In the future, the update reporting form may be further revised to provide a specific place for such involvement to be reported.

10. *Will grantees be able to edit the information in their six-month project update reports?*

    Grantees will be able to access the Web-based reporting form, partially complete the form, save their work, and return later to edit their earlier work or complete additional sections. When each section is completed (and the grantee is sure no further changes or additions will be required), grantees will submit that section of the form. Once a section has been submitted, it cannot be re-accessed or changed. After the system closes at the end of the reporting period, grantees will be unable to access the system to change or submit their reports.

11. What provisions are being made to deal with possible system time-outs or crashes?

    The purpose of pilot-testing the system in November is to identify and correct any system failures prior to opening the system to all grantees. In addition, these concerns will be addressed with the contractor as a part of ongoing system development and maintenance.

12. Some questions on the six-month project update ask for data about specific target populations. However, in some communities, program activities are targeted at more than one population group. How should grantees address this when completing their updates?

    Communities that record data by subgroups should report their data by subgroup. A question will be added to the monitoring tool to allow other communities to report data in a category that does not require separation by subgroups.

Future TA Calls

Future TA calls will focus on how to complete specific sections of the six-month project update, including the new general update section. In addition, grantees who are unsure how or where to include specific program information in their six-month project updates may e-mail their questions to Ms. Brown at tbrown@hrsa.gov.